

86th AW commander visits

By Master Sgt. Stefan Alford
Public affairs

469th Air Base Group members got a pep talk, as well as information on a variety of issues from the 86th Airlift Wing commander during a commander's call in the Rhein-Main base theater Oct. 11.

"You're a valued part of the 86th Airlift Wing and I'm here to tell you how much you mean to the mission," Brig. Gen. Mark Volcheff told the crowd of several hundred military and civilian group members. The group falls under the 86thAW at Ramstein.

Although the commander's call had been planned for several months, the recent terrorist attacks in the United States dominated the first half of the general's hour-long presentation.

"I echo President Bush's words – 'Military: be ready,'" said Volcheff.

"The campaign against terror is a real challenge," he added. "(With this enemy) there are no centers of gravity, specific countries, or geopolitical structures. One can easily think, they hit us, we're hitting them back – isn't that retaliation? But if you think about it, it's a form of self de-

fense."

"It's self defense of our way of life and the freedoms we enjoy," said Volcheff. "People don't want to live in fear of terrorism."

The general commended Team Rhein-Main's contributions to the ongoing humanitarian mission in Afghanistan.

"The strategic airlift flow that comes through here is so critical in forming the air bridge in support (of Operation Enduring Freedom)," said Volcheff.

While the 469th ABG provides the infrastructure and base operating support, the 726th Air Mobility Squadron at Rhein-Main and the 100th Air Refueling Wing from RAF Mildenhall, England, are the primary units involved in the flying mission.

Volcheff, who is also commander of the Kaiserslautern Military Community, also addressed the Rhein-Main closure situation in regards to budget constraints, explaining that the base wouldn't see any new major construction projects prior to the slated closure in 2005.

"We're not able to do the military construction projects you deserve, but we'll

continue to renovate existing facilities."

Some examples of recent quality-of-life improvements at Rhein-Main that the general pointed to include the \$140,000 ball field renovations, the \$40,000 parking lot paving at the fitness center, and the \$20,000 sidewalk construction between the shoppette and youth center parking lots in Gateway Gardens.

Also on tap is a planned \$100,000 refurbishment of the base theater entrance and lobby area to modernize it.

"I have been impressed," Volcheff said of his quick tour of the base. "I'm very pleased with your facilities. There's a general attitude of having pride in the base appearance here."

The general also spoke briefly about topics of general military interest such as the new Uniformed Services Thrift Savings Plan, safety, and promotion rates.

In closing, Volcheff again thanked group members for their hard work and team efforts.

"You don't do it for the paychecks, the time off or the travel – it's because of the professionalism you have and your dedicated support in defense of your country."